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# Clarridge tells panel he didn't know Hawks were on plane

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CIA counterterrorism chief Duane Clarridge did not know U.S. weapons were on a November 1985 flight he helped coordinate from Israel to Iran, according to transcripts of his congressional testimony released yesterday.

But Mr. Clarridge told the Iran-Contra investigative committee behind closed doors that he suspected the Israeli cargo plane was not really carrying "sophisticated oil-drilling parts," as Lt. Col. Oliver North had told him.

In fact, the plane was carrying U.S. Hawk missiles from Tel Aviv to Iran when it hit a landing-rights

snag in Portugal on Nov. 21, 1985. At that point, Col. North, a National Security Council aide, urgently enlisted CIA help, triggering a barrage of top-secret messages between Washington and Lisbon.

"I was not unaware that there were various arms deals going on, or that Iran was trying to work out, or that people were trying to work out with them. Most of them apparently were scams of some sort," Mr. Clarridge testified Aug. 4. "I'm sure that crossed my mind."

He said he did not "officially" learn weapons were on board the Israeli flight until January 1986.

The November 1985 shipment is of special interest to Congress, because CIA Director William Casey

testified in November 1986 that agency officials believed the cargo was oil-drilling parts.

Mr. Clarridge, who was chief of the CIA's European division at the time of the shipment, disputed Col. North's assertions that he was one of a handful of agency officials in December 1985 with detailed knowledge of the Iran initiative.

"On occasion, North had a tendency to use my name ... because if I said it was a good idea, then they tended to think it was a good idea," Mr. Clarridge said.

Mr. Clarridge repeatedly testified that he did not recall details of conversations he had with Col. North on the November 1985 shipment.

Sen. William Cohen, Maine Re-

publican, told the CIA official, "On practically every single major event that we have been considering, you have virtually no memory at all ..."

Mr. Cohen faulted Mr. Clarridge's inability to remember details of a November 1986 White House meeting in which a small group of top officials prepared congressional testimony for Mr. Casey. In that session, Col. North and others asserted there was no U.S. government knowledge of the Hawk missiles aboard the November 1985 Israeli flight.

"I don't think the issue of the November flight was a big one at that particular meeting," Mr. Clarridge said.

"It certainly was a big one," Mr. Cohen countered. "It was the major issue whereby it was stated that ... everyone in the government believed that it was oil-drilling equipment."

Mr. Clarridge, however, stuck by his contention that the issue was not raised.

Before Mr. Clarridge took over the CIA's European division in the fall of 1984, he oversaw the agency's Latin American division.

The Iran-Contra committee released a stack of heavily edited documents yesterday indicating that Mr. Clarridge was involved in CIA efforts to secure foreign funding for the Nicaraguan resistance as early as 1984.

"I'm sorry, I can't remember it," Mr. Clarridge told the committee. "For you, all these events may take on an enormity that they certainly don't for somebody who is working on this thing day-to-day."

Mr. Clarridge said he believed Col. North's testimony that Mr. Casey favored the creation of an "off-the-shelf, self-sustaining, stand-alone" entity to support secret activities outside the CIA. But he said he never discussed the subject with Col. North or Mr. Casey, who died in May.

"I think ... and it is just speculation, that such an entity would be very appealing to the director, who saw a role for, let us say, the private sector that went far beyond the use of the private sector by the U.S. government," Mr. Clarridge said. "In his view, it wasn't used enough."